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SUBJECT: LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR MULTILATERAL PUSH ON ELECTIONS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. In anticipation of Ambassador Carter's imminent arrival, Embassy began laying the groundwork for a multilateral strategy to engage the Government of Guinea (GoG) and advance legislative elections. Counterparts from the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (UN) agreed that a more unified approach is needed and expressed enthusiasm for multilateral engagement. Next steps include individual meetings with the British and French Ambassadors, a smaller meeting with key missions to feed into a larger G8 meeting, and possibly, a UN-hosted private dinner with the prime minister. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Charge and poloff met with the EU on September 6 and with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on September 7. The EU was represented by Fabio DiStefano, Charge d'Affaires, and Lena Veierskov, who oversees the implementation of the EU's election assistance program. The UNDP was represented by Mbaranga Gasarabwe who is the resident coordinator of the UN System in Guinea. Both meetings were positive and contacts expressed enthusiasm for developing an effective multilateral approach, spearheaded by the UN, to engage the GoG on elections.

WE ALL NEED TO BE IN THE SAME BOAT

¶3. (SBU) DiStefano of the EU said that some elements within the GoG are delaying progress on elections for political reasons. To date, the EU's engagement has been on a technical level, but a political approach is necessary to achieve results, DiStefano said. He added that political diplomacy must go hand in hand with technical assistance or the entire electoral process could be blocked. DiStefano said that this is an area in which a multilateral approach could be particularly effective. He added that all donors need to be in the same boat, but that has not happened yet.

¶4. (SBU) In addition to the over \$9.5 million in assistance the EU has already committed for voter registration, according to DiStefano, the EU is exploring the possibility of additional funding for technical assistance to the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and the National Assembly.

¶5. (SBU) In the meeting with Mbaranga of the UN, Charge emphasized U.S. interest in employing a multilateral strategy in order to advance mutual interests in achieving successful, transparent legislative elections. Mbaranga expressed appreciation for this initiative and willingness to bring everyone together to come up with a workable plan. She said that UNDP is hosting a large meeting among donors on the technical level on September 14 and suggested using that as a springboard for engaging partners.

MANY VOICES - ONE MESSAGE

¶6. (SBU) Mbaranga said the G8 must have a "frank talk" with Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate in order to emphasize the need for concrete progress on key issues, including elections and investigations into

human rights abuses committed in January and February. She added that whenever she brings up the subject of elections to Kouyate, he quickly changes the topic. "The fact is that we see a crisis coming, but how do we prevent it?" Mbaranga said. She added that the international community cannot be complacent, but needs to get several voices together to send the same message. Mbaranga offered to host a private dinner for Kouyate, prior to his September 21 departure to the US for the UN General Assembly, during which members of the G8 could convey this common message.

¶17. (SBU) Mbaranga and the Charge agreed to an initial strategy under which the Charge will meet individually with the British and French Ambassadors and discuss possible avenues for multilateral cooperation. Following those meetings, Mbaranga offered to host a larger group meeting (composed of the UN, the EU, the US, the UK and France) to further define a strategic approach that could then be presented to the larger G8 meeting for additional support. Both agreed that it is important to start laying the groundwork now so that when the new US and EU Ambassadors arrive, they can further develop the initiative.

COMMENT

¶18. (SBU) While several diplomatic missions have either concrete programs in place to support elections or an interest in ensuring that they move forward transparently, cooperation is disjointed. This is a critical period in Guinea's democratic evolution and it is essential that the diplomatic community present a united front with a common message. These initial meetings are important first steps as we, along with our partners, begin to define a framework for multilateral cooperation under which heads of missions can engage the Government of Guinea more effectively.

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